**Fostering Metacognitive Minds:**

**Exploring Critical Reading Strategies in**

**Reading Workshop**

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**“True comprehension goes beyond literal understanding and involves the reader’s interaction with text.” ~Anne Goudvis and Stephanie Harvey**

~For years I felt like something was missing in my reading instruction. My students were getting the job done, reading texts and completing a myriad of activities to “prove” that they understood what they had read, but I knew there had to be more. I wanted my students to be critical thinkers, moving from the literal, primarily surface level comprehension they were demonstrating to the kind of deep understanding that would help them form a solid foundation for their lives as readers. Resolving to rethink the way in which I teach my students to comprehend what they read, I decided to explore critical reading strategies in the hopes of fostering metacognitive minds in my classroom!

**MetacognitionMC900434389[1]**

**Thinking as we read.**

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**Connecting background knowledge Developing and contemplating complex**

**to new information. questions related to text.**

**Visualizing MC900250145[1] Determining Importance j0300840**

**Using all of our senses to fully Making decisions about overarching**

**experience a text. main ideas or themes.**

**Inferring MC900187587[1] Synthesizing MC900039365[1]**

**Combining our schema with the text Bringing together our thinking about a text**

**to draw conclusions. (through means such as retelling).**

**“Metacognition is like using all of the strategies at once, and we can do it in any book!” ~Third Grader**

**Strategy Introduction:**

**Texts I Loved and Activities That Worked for Us! ☺**

**MetacognitionMC900434389[1]**

* **“Real Reading Cereal”- Adding our thinking to the text we read. (Comprehension Connections, 11)**
* **Charting “How We Know When We Don’t Know”-Determining when meaning has broken down and finding corresponding “fix-up” strategies. (Strategies that Work, 79).**
* **Marking text with questions and “lightning bolts” to illustrate spots of confusion and clarity. (Strategies that Work, 79)**
* **Recording our thinking directly onto the text (such as articles or practice OAA passages).**

**Excellent Texts for Teaching Metacognition:**

* **My Great Aunt Arizona by Gloria Houston, Illustrated by Susan Condie Lamb**
* **The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi**
* **Various articles from National Geographic Explorer and Time for Kids**

**Schema **

* **Schema T-Chart (Ex. “Things we Know About Glockenspiels vs. Kings Island”). (Comprehension Connections, 33)**
* **Creating a connection web and adding sticky notes as we learn about:**

**-Text to self connections**

**-Text to world connections**

**-Text to text connections**

* **Distinguishing between deep and distracting connections. (Strategies that Work, 95)**
* **Discovering how our schema changes with new information. (Strategies that Work, 97)**

**Excellent Texts for Teaching Schema:**

* **Roller Coaster by Marla Frazee**
* **The Talking Cloth by Rhonda Mitchell**
* **Thundercake by Patricia Polacco**
* **Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco**
* **My Rotten Red-Headed Older Brother by Patricia Polacco**
* **Countries of the World Series (Various Authors)**

**Visualizing** MC900250145[1]

* **Sensory explorations- students look, listen, touch, taste (?), and smell different objects, charting descriptive words and pictures that come to mind.**
* **Learning how our visualizations rely on our schema. (Reading with Meaning, 80)**
* **Conveying our visualizations through sketching and talking (“Sketch to Stretch” –Thoughtful Education, 44).**
* **Discussing the connection between author’s word choice and rich visualizations with poetry (“Showing Not Telling”). (Reading with Meaning, 83)**

**Excellent Texts for Teaching Visualizing:**

* **Creatures of Earth, Sea, and Sky by Georgia Heard, Illustrated by Jennifer Ownings Dewey**
* **In November by Cynthia Rylant, Illustrated by Jill Kastner**
* **Fireflies by Julie Brinckloe**
* **Night in the Country by Cynthia Rylant, Illustrated by Mary Szilagyi**
* **Greyling by Jane Yolen, Illustrated by David Blue**
* **Thundercake by Patricia Polacco**

**Inferring** MC900187587[1]

* **Inferring Role Play- students act out situations or emotions for classmates to infer. (Strategies that Work, 138)**
* **Practicing inferring at the word, then sentence level, using crucial context clues. (The Café Book, 99)**
* **Drawing conclusions based on schema. (“Inferring About a Person” activity). (Comprehension Connections, 53)**
* **Applying the following equation to reading: Text Clues + Schema= My Inference. (Strategies that Work, 142)**
* **Associating visualizing with inferring**
* **Learning essential skills such as predicting and determining character traits with inferring.**

**Excellent Texts for Teaching Inferring:**

* **The Three Questions by John J. Muth**
* **The Important Book by Margaret Wise Brown, Illustrated by Leonard Weisgard**
* **Good Dog Carl by Alexandra Day**
* **The Wreck of the Zephyr by Chris Van Allsburg**
* **Creatures of Earth, Sea, and Sky by Georgia Heard, Illustrated by Jennifer Ownings Dewey**
* **Various articles from National Geographic Explorer and Time for Kids**

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* **Piquing curiosity with an interesting object and gathering questions throughout the week. (Comprehension Connections, 65)**
* **Determining the difference between the “thick and thin” questions we ask before, during, and after a piece of text. (Strategies that Work, 116)**
* **Coding the answers we find as “I” (inference), “T” (text) or “OS” (outside source). (Reading with Meaning, 128)**
* **Creating question webs to capture thinking about “thick questions”. (Reading with Meaning, 131)**
* **Preparing to answer different types of questions in testing situations.**

**Excellent Texts for Teaching Questioning:**

* **The Stranger by Chris Van Allsburg**
* **An Angel for Solomon Singer by Cynthia Rylant, Illustrated by Peter Catalanotto**
* **Grandfather Twilight by Barbara Berger**
* **Various articles from National Geographic Explorer and Time for Kids**

**Determining Importance j0300840 and Synthesizing MC900039365[1]**

* **“Determining What’s Important” in my purse- or “What do I really need to remember about this text”?” (Comprehension Connections, 78)**
* **Distinguishing between a topic and a main idea with a “topic bullseye.”**
* **Finding main ideas in fiction with the “thick question” connection.**
* **Determining themes using knowledge of inferring; supporting themes with details from the story.**
* **Synthesizing through retelling fiction and non-fiction texts- “mining for the gold” and learning to “check for understanding” as we read to summarize along the way. (The Café Book, 30)**
* **Using previously learned strategies to synthesize a text- using our schema, visualizations, and inferences to determining how our thinking changes as we read a selection. (Strategies that Work, 183)**

**Excellent Texts for Teaching Determining What’s Important and Synthesizing:**

* **The Big Fitz by Jack Edwards**
* **An Angel for Solomon Singer by Cynthia Rylant, Illustrated by Peter Catalanotto**
* **The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi**
* **Various articles from National Geographic Explorer and Time for Kids**
* **Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman, Illustrated by Caroline Binch**
* **The Wreck of the Zephyr by Chris Van Allsburg**
* **The Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munsch, Illustrated by Michael Martchenko**
* **Oliver Button is a Sissy by Tomie dePaola**

**Using the Strategies Together**

* **Watching student-led strategy discussions modeled on “Into the Book” at www.reading.ecb.org**
* **Creating a reading strategy class puzzle. (**[**http://learningpad.net**](http://learningpad.net)**)**
* **Coding strategies for class and small group discussions. (Strategies that Work, 113)**
* **Recording metacognition directly onto text- articles and OAA passages.**
* **Students adding to running dialogue about a text on the computer. (**[**www.reading.ecb.org**](http://www.reading.ecb.org)**)**

**Excellent Texts for:**

* **Various articles from National Geographic Explorer and Time for Kids**
* **The Wretched Stone by Chris Van Allsburg**
* **The Garden of Abdul Gazazi by Chris Van Allsburg**
* **Alejandro’s Gift by Richard Albert, Illustrated by Sylvia Long**
* **Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney**

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**“Today there is a wide body of research supporting the effectiveness of explicit comprehension strategy instruction and the need for students to become metacognitive.” ~Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman**

**My Metacognition About Metacognition**

**(Or… What I Found to be Essential Overall for Teaching Reading Strategies)**

* ***Focus-* Reading a variety of strategy literature and focusing specifically on what was aligned with state standards for my grade level was key.**
* ***Workshop Approach-* Extensive teacher modeling, think alouds, and guided practice were needed in a whole group setting before students explored the strategies in self-selected texts or discussion groups in reading workshop.**
* **Students practiced strategies through “Daily 4” rotations: “Read to Self”, “Read to Someone”, “Respond to Reading”, and “Read with a Group”. (Adapted from Gail Boushey and Joan Moser’s “Daily 5”)**
* **Teaching the strategies through a reading workshop format created an environment of thinking, collaboration, and self-motivation as students made the strategies work for them in naturally differentiated ways.**
* ***Sharing-* Post-workshop sharing sessions were powerful. Students reveled in using the strategy language provided by “talk starters” to describe their thinking. “Talk starters” were also helpful in student-led discussion groups as students practiced strategy use and received positive peer feedback.**
* ***Concrete Comparisons-* Comparing the reading strategies to concrete objects and images was instrumental in helping students to understand the strategies, despite their abstract nature.**
* ***Transcending Subject Areas-* Students carried their knowledge of reading strategies to other subject areas, especially writing, which led to an enhanced understanding of how to use the strategy in both areas of the curriculum.**
* ***Strategies as a Framework*- Teaching isolated concepts (such characterization, making predictions, and word decoding) within the cohesive framework of “reading strategies” provided the potential for important connections and increased concept retention.**
* ***Natural Strategy Use-* Strategy use had to be authentic- when students weren’t bound by making 3 connections, 4 visualizations, or coming up with 2 questions, they were more apt to try out the strategies and record their thinking on reading response sheets, especially if it was in a text they had chosen!**
* ***Text Choice*- Text choice was extremely important; we learned that the right text can elicit high-level thinking and rich, powerful discussions. Exploring reading strategies in a variety of genres gave the students practical tools for applying them in different situations.**

**~ The critical reading strategies we explored did a lot more than strengthen comprehension for my third graders. They inspired a sense of enthusiasm and pride among my students who truly amazed me with their metacognitive minds! Hooray! ☺**

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**Super Duper Reading Strategy Resources**

**Boushey, Gail and Joan Moser. *The Cafe Book: Engaging All Students in Daily Literacy Assessment and Instruction*. Portland: Stenhouse, 2009. Print.**

**Boushey, Gail and Joan Moser. *The Daily 5: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades.* Portland: Stenhouse, 2006. Print.**

**Calkins, Lucy. *The Art of Teaching Reading.* Columbus: Allyn and Bacon, 2000. Print.**

**Donahue, Lisa. *Independent Reading: Inside the Box.* Markham: Pembroke, 2008. Print.**

**Harvey, Stephanie, and Anne Goudvis. *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement.* Portland: Stenhouse, 2007. Print.**

***Into the Book.* Wisconsin Educational Communications Board. Web. 1 July 2010.** [**www.reading.ecb.org**](http://www.reading.ecb.org)

**Keene, Ellin Oliver. “New Horizons in Comprehension.” *Educational Leadership.* Mar. 2010:69-73. Print.**

**Keene, Ellin Oliver and Susan Zimmerman. *Mosaic of Thought: The Power of Comprehension Strategy Instruction.*Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2007. Print.**

**McGregor, Tanny. *Comprehension Connections: Bridges to Strategic Reading.* Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2007. Print.**

**Miller, Debbie. *Reading With Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades.* Portland: Stenhouse, 2002. Print.**

***Mosaic Listserve: Teaching Tools*. Stenhouse Publishers. Web. 1 July 2010. <**[**www.readinglady.com**](http://www.readinglady.com)**>**

**Tovani, Chris. *I Read It, But I Don't Get It: Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers.* Portland: Stenhouse, 2000. Print.**